

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E. O. 11652: NA
TAGS: CASC SHUM IS JO
SUBJ: AMERICAN CITIZEN SCHOOLCHILDREN RESIDENT IN THE
WEST BANK

1. SUMMARY: SOME AMERICAN CITIZEN CHILDREN OF ARAB
DESCENT WHO ARE TEMPORARILY RESIDING IN THE WEST BANK
HAVE BEEN DENIED PERMISSION TO ATTEND LOCAL SCHOOLS.
THE EMBASSY AND THE CONSULATE GENERAL HAVE INTERCEDED
AT WORKING LEVEL ON BEHALF OF THE CHILDREN, BUT WITHOUT
SUCCESS. WE NOW PLAN TO RAISE THE ISSUE WITH THE DEPUTY
MINISTER OF DEFENSE. END SUMMARY

2. A NUMBER OF AMERICAN CITIZEN CHILDREN OF ARAB EXTRAC-
TION RESIDE IN THE WEST BANK. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR
RESIDENCE VARIES; SOME RESIDE WITH THEIR PARENTS BUT
MORE OFTEN WITH GRANDPARENTS OR OTHER RELATIVES OR GOD-
PARENTS. MOST OF THE CHILDREN DO NOT HAVE PROPER STATUS
AS ALIENS; MOST OF THEM ARE ADMITTED AS TEMPORARY VISITORS
RATHER THAN PERMANENT RESIDENTS. USUALLY THEY ARE
CHILDREN OF PARENTS WHO HAVE IMMIGRATED TO THE US,
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HAVE BEEN NATURALIZED, AND ARE EMPLOYED THERE; THE CHILDREN
ARE SENT BACK TO FAMILIES HERE BECAUSE BOTH PARENTS
ARE EMPLOYED, IT IS CHEAPER TO LIVE HERE, THE PARENTS
WISH THE CHILDREN TO RETAIN A KNOWLEDGE OF ARABIC AND
ARAB CULTURE, ETC. THE INTENTION OF THE PARENTS USUALLY
IS TO HAVE THE CHILDREN REMAIN HERE FOR SEVERAL YEARS,
I.E. ON A SEMIPERMANENT BASIS. USUALLY THESE CITIZEN

CHILDREN

LIVE IN THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF THE WEST BANK WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, BUT FROM TIME TO TIME CERTAIN PROBLEMS ARISE.

3. ONE SUCH PROBLEM HAS ARISEN IN THE VILLAGE OF TURMUS AIYA, WHICH IS LOCATED JUST OFF THE JERUSALEM-NABLUS ROAD, ABOUT HALFWAY BETWEEN THOSE TWO CITIES. SOME SIXTY AMERICAN CHILDREN RESIDE IN THE VILLAGE AND HAVE BEEN DENIED PERMISSION TO ATTEND THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL THERE THIS YEAR. THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED THIS SCHOOL, ALTHOUGH IN SOME CASES WITH DIFFICULTY OR AFTER SOME DELAYS. BUT WHEN THIS TERM BEGAN LAST SEPTEMBER THE LOCAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES REFUSED TO PERMIT THEIR ATTENDANCE. THE PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF THE CHILDREN APPROACHED THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN JERUSALEM FOR HELP AND, WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT INTERCESSION WITH THE GOI WOULD BE NECESSARY, THEY TURNED TO THE EMBASSY FOR ASSISTANCE.

4. SINCE OCTOBER, THE CASE HAS BEEN DISCUSSED SOME 15 TIMES AND WITH TWO INFORMAL LETTERS TO MFA OFFICIALS AT THE WORKING LEVEL (BUT OF THE NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIVISION AND

GONEN, THE LIAISON OFFICER TO THE MILITARY ADMINISTRATION). OUR EFFORTS AT FIRST WERE TO ENSURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT THE CHILDREN WOULD NOT BE DEPORTED FOR HAVING OVER-

STAYED THEIR ADMISSION AND THEN TO GAIN THEIR ADMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SCHOOL. WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED THEY WILL NOT BE DEPORTED AND THAT THEY MAY BE READMITTED TO THE SCHOOL AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FALL 1978 TERM BUT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO GET APPROVAL FOR THEM TO GO TO THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL NOW.

5. IN THE MEANTIME, THE CHILDREN EITHER ATTEND SCHOOLS IN OTHER TOWNS (AT CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE AND DIFFICULTY-- FOR EXAMPLE, ONE ARRANGEMENT IS FOR 12 OF THEM TO BE TRANSPORTED IN A STATION WAGON IN WHICH THEY ARE COVERED BY A TARP BECAUSE THE FAMILIES CANNOT AFFORD LICENSE FOR A BUS), ATTEND AN OVERCROWDED PRIVATE KINDERGARTEN IN THE VILLAGE, OR REMAIN OUT OF SCHOOL. THE PARENTS ARGUE THAT THE SITUATION IS UNJUST AND UNREASONABLE; THERE IS SPACE AVAILABLE IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SCHOOL, WHICH WAS BUILT SEVERAL YEARS AGO BY THE VILLAGES, THEMSELVES, AND ALL THE CHILDREN ARE MEMBERS OF FAMILIES WHICH PAY LOCAL TAXES. THE PARENTS AND GUACIZMAM ARE WILLING TO PAY TUITION COSTS IF THIS SHOULD BE REQUIRED.

6. A DELEGATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARENTS AND GUARDIANS CALLED ON THE DCM MARCH 3. HE DISCUSSED THE CASE WITH THEM AND SAID HE WOULD RAISE IT WITH THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES. WE PLAN TO SEEK AN APPOINTMENT WITH DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER TZIPORI THIS WEEK AND WILL SAY THAT WE FIND THE TREATMENT OF THE CHILDREN UNREASONABLE AND STRONGLY URGE HIM TO TAKE STEPS TO HAVE THIS UNFORTUNATE SITUATION CORRECTED. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT WITH THE BACKGROUND OF THE CASE IN THAT SOME PUBLIC OR CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRES ARE

RECEIVED.

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7. COMMENT: WE ARE UNABLE TO EXPLAIN THE ACTION OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES IN THIS CASE. IN OUR INQUIRIES OF THE MFA, WE WERE NEVER GIVEN ANY EXPLANATION FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNOR'S DECISION; THE PARENTS TELL US THEY WERE NOT INFORMED OF ANY REASON ("BUT, OF COURSE, THEY NEVER TELL US ANY REASONS FOR THEIR DECISIONS.") IT WOULD BE OF INTEREST TO US TO ESTABLISH WHETHER THIS AFFAIR REPRESENTS A CHANGE IN PHILOSOPHY REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE TERRITORIES ON THE PART OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH WE ARE INCLINED TO DOUBT IT, OR WHETHER IT REFLECTS SIMPLY A DIFFERENT WAY OF OPERATING BY THE LOCAL GOVERNOR, WHO TOOK UP HIS POSITION LAST SUMMER. THERE ARE PROBABLY AS MANY AS -00 U.S. CITIZEN CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK (MAINLY IN THE RAMALLAH AREA) IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES AND WE WILL INFORM TZIPORI OF OUR INTEREST IN THEM AS WELL, ALTHOUGH THE PROBLEM IS CENTERED IN TURMUS AIYA. THE GROUP WHICH CALLED AT THE EMBASSY TOLD US THAT THE VILLAGE AND ITS ENVIRONS HAVE SOME 4000 INHABITANTS OF WHOM SOME 1500 ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS OR HAVE CLOSE FAMILY TIES WITH THE US. THE VILLAGE IS APPROXIMATELY ONE KILOMETER SOUTH OF SHILO BUT WE SEE NO POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PROBLEMS SURROUNDING THE SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY THERE; THE DIFFICULTY WITH THE SCHOOLCHILDREN BEGAN LAST FALL LONG BEFORE THE RECENT "ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG" WAS ESTABLISHED THERE. LEWIS

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